

other (explain): _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public - Local

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

Noncontributing

Category of Property: District

810 building(s)Number of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register: n/a40 sites270 structures

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

00 objects3910 TOTAL

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

Current Functions:

TRANSPORTATION/airport
DEFENSE/air facility/

TRANSPORTATION/airport

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Materials:

OTHER: World War II Temporary Buildings

foundation: concrete
walls: corrugated metal; asbestos; concrete; brick
roof: corrugated metal
other: brick

Narrative Description

The Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base Historic District is located approximately three miles west-southwest of the town of Cut Bank, Montana, the Glacier County seat. The district lies amid the rolling hills and coulees of north central Montana, within the boundaries of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. The district measures over 1,700 acres, and includes the historic building cluster and air field structures, including the runways and taxiways. Construction started in June of 1942, and the base opened in November of the same year.

The Cut Bank Army Air Force Base Historic District consists of a historic building cluster along the gridded streets and avenues at the southeast end of the base as well as the runways and associated structures to the north and west. From as far as 30 miles distant, the enormous 1942-era B-17 hangar is visible across the windswept, broken landscape. The hangar serves as the focal point for the district, and is located in the heart of the building cluster.

Access to the building cluster is from Valier Highway, which runs generally north-south along the east boundary of the district. Typical of Army Air Force bases, gridded streets historically divided the airport into use zones. Those streets are distinguishable, though only a few are now used and maintained.

Resource Descriptions

Squadron Supply Building Foundation (Building T-110, constructed 1942, one contributing site)

The long, narrow, rectangular concrete foundation pad for the Squadron Supply Building is located south and east of the Recreation Hall, T-131. The building was used for storage and distribution of enlisted men's supplies. The Army Air Force salvaged the building in 1948, leaving only the concrete pad.

(See continuation sheet)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Significant Person(s): n/a

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Areas of Significance: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT;
TRANSPORTATION; MILITARY; ARCHITECTURE

Period(s) of Significance: 1941-1958

Significant Dates: 1941, 1942, 1943, 1948, 1958

Architect/Builder: Army Corps of Engineers/ Askevold and
Ruud-general base contractor; Glacier Construction Co. –
water wells and water distribution system; Frank Haas
Construction – sewer treatment and collection; J. Hugo
Aronson – water tower and water storage tank.**Narrative Statement of Significance**

The Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The district is significant for its association with the nation's and the U.S. Army Air Corps' military buildup during World War II. The Airfield was one of four facilities constructed for the U.S. Army Air Corps in Montana to train squadrons in navigation of the B-17 Flying Fortress and use of the top secret Norden Bombsight. As the U.S. Department of Defense systematically removes World War II "temporary" buildings under its control, these buildings gain additional significance for their representation of this important period in the nation's history. Also, the district is significant for its associations with local commercial airline service and its role in the development of Cut Bank and the surrounding communities.

The resources at the Cut Bank Municipal Airport tell the significant story of the airfield, from its beginnings as a private endeavor and then providing commercial service to greater Cut Bank area, to its incarnation as an Army Air Force Satellite Airfield during World War II, and as a city/county aviation center through the post-war era. The district was the location of one of the early sites of commercial air service in rural Montana. Efforts to establish the airport started in the 1930s. Commercial service began in 1941 and continued through 1958. Soon after Western Airlines began regular flights to the airport, plans were made to establish the airfield as a training base during WWII. The 2nd, 385th, 390th and 401st Bomb Groups all trained at the Cut Bank Army Air Force base during its short life. Their Norden Bombsight and B-17 training at the base significantly contributed to the Allied victory in WWII.

During the time the base was active, the citizens of Cut Bank made an effort to be responsive to the base personnel and make them "feel at home." This was not always the community attitude toward military bases. People went out of their way to make the soldier's stay in the area the best possible in war-time conditions. Even after its role as a training center ceased in 1943 and Army conveyed its remaining property in 1948, the airport continued its vital role in the commercial and economic development of Cut Bank and the surrounding communities. The airport, whether it is from a commercial or military aspect, has always been a contributor to the economy of the area. Starting from the original construction of the airstrip, moving to commercial construction and the building of the base, improvements and additions to the property plus the businesses that have located at the airport, the effect has always been positive for the local economy. Customs offices have been active at the airport for over 65 years. Currently, there is an active campaign to establish commercial passenger air service to the area again.

As the U.S. Department of Defense systematically removes World War II "temporary" buildings under its control, these resources gain additional significance for their representation of this important period in the nation's history. The buildings and structures, in addition to the configuration of the building clusters, runways, taxiways, and hardstands is largely intact from the time of construction, and represents an increasingly rare and important property type.

For its associations with the development the greater Cut Bank community, the local history of transportation, and World War II military history, the Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A.

(See continuation sheet)

9. Major Bibliographic References

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other -- Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 1,780 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	A	12	
	B	12	
	C	12	
	D	12	

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): Portions of Sections 14-17 and 21-23, T33N, R6W

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is defined by a polygon with vertices at UTM Points A-R.

Boundary Justification

The boundary is drawn to include that real property historically associated with the Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base that lies west of Valier Highway and is currently owned by the airport. Though that property associated with the airport east of Valier Highway was part of the base, no historic resources have been identified there. In addition, the integrity of those parcels has been compromised by the construction of a motor racing track.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title:	Roy Nolkamper and Bob Jacoby		
organization:		date:	December 15, 2006
street & number:	P.O. Box 2094	telephone:	(406) 873-5566
city or town:	Cut Bank	state:	MT zip code: 59427

Property Owner

name/title:	City of Cut Bank (½ interest) and Glacier County (½ interest)		
c/o:	City-County Airport Board		
street & number:	P.O. Box 130		
city or town:	Cut Bank	state:	MT zip code: 59427

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 1

Enlisted Men's Recreation Hall (Building T-131, constructed 1942, one contributing building)

The recreation building is a large, one-story, gable-roofed, 40' x 132' rectangular building on a concrete slab foundation. It is located across the main airport road from the B-17 hangar. Asbestos tiles cover the exterior walls, and corrugated metal covers the roof. Roof features include the low remnants of interior brick chimneys at the corners and two metal stovepipes low on the slope above the north elevation entry. Wall and roof construction uses 2 x 4 wall and ceiling members, covered with shiplap boards and tar paper held in place with lath strips. The gable-front building faces west, and access is provided on the façade through a five-panel wooden doors at the south side. On the south side of the west elevation, plywood covers a large sliding door opening. Both the south and north elevations contain fourteen evenly-spaced four-light, fixed, wood-frame windows and centered entries. The south entry is a shed-roofed extension containing five-panel wooden double doors. The north entry is a large sliding door. The east (rear) elevation contains a gabled entry like the façade, flanked by single window openings and a louvered vent above. This was where many nightly movies were shown to the enlisted staff. USO dances were also held there. After the base was closed, the building was used as a meeting room, dance area, storage and lastly as a large rabbit-breeding facility.

Fire Station Foundation (aka Crash Shed, Building T-201, constructed 1942, one contributing site)

The Fire Station/Crash Shed foundation pad, located at the northeast corner of "A" Avenue and Second Street, measures 32'x48' with 26'x56' and 8'x12' extensions at the northeast side. Originally the wood-frame building faced the corner, canted 45 degrees rather than parallel to the street. The building was salvaged in 1992, leaving only the pad foundation.

Motor Repair Shop (Building T-203, constructed 1942, one non-contributing building)

The Motor Repair Shop is a side-gabled, rectangular building covered with metal siding and roofing over the original tarpaper and lathe construction. There are four overhead garage door openings spaced across the east elevation. During the modern period, the original overhead garage doors were replaced and the footprint altered from a L-shaped building measuring 32' x 88' with a 18' x 54' addition to a rectangular plan. The building has been modified but is currently in use as a truck wash and storage facility by Glacier County. Due to its size, it utilized higher quality construction and has been in use since the facility was turned over to the city and county. Because of the substantial alteration, the Motor Repair Shop is a non-contributing building within the district.

Wash Stand (Building T-205, constructed after 1958, one non-contributing building)

This rectangular, wood-frame, gable-front building rests on a concrete foundation. Both the east and west elevations are filled with single, modern metal overhead garage doors. The south elevation contains two evenly-spaced, large, twenty-light wood-frame fixed windows. The north elevation has no windows, but does feature two wooden pedestrian doors – one at both the east and west end. Metal vent pipes protrude from both the north and south slopes of the roof at the extreme west end of the building. A third pipe protrudes from the low on the west quarter of the south slope. Horizontally-placed sheets of corrugated metal siding cover the exterior walls and the roof. This non-contributing building was constructed above the wash stand (T-205), a grate where vehicles and equipment were washed during the historic period.

Oil Storage House (Building T-206, constructed 1942, one contributing building)

The oil storage house is an "L"-shaped, hollow core clay tile building on a concrete foundation. It measures 15' by 17', with a 7'x12' shed extension at the façade. The side-gabled building faces west, and that elevation contains the only entrance, a cross-braced vertical plank door located on the south side of the shed extension. Both the south and north elevations contain single four-over-four-light double-hung window openings, now covered with corrugated metal, centered beneath the gable end. High in the gable ends are louvered vents. A brick interior chimney protrudes from the north side of the shed roof slope. Asphalt T-lock shingles cover the roof. The interior of the building consists of two rooms separated by a thick masonry wall.

Also called the "Dope House," the oil storage house was constructed to store lubrication oil. However, the "Dope House" was also used to store dope used to repair the fabric on the B-17 aircraft fuselage. Dope is an extremely flammable thick liquid which is painted onto the fabric, and had to be applied at around 130 degrees. The Army Air Force Base used the building as a containment facility in case of fire as the liquid was heated. Currently, the Glacier County Road Department Administrator uses it for livestock feed storage.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 2

Water Tower Footings (Structure T-207, constructed 1942, one contributing site)

Four large concrete footings, each with two centered steel reinforcing bars, indicate the former location of the WWII-era water tower and platform for the aviation beacon north of the recreation hall. Although the tower was torn down in the mid 1990s, the footings still remain, set 42' apart. This tower was a land mark for the area for many years as it was painted red and white and stood 111 feet in height. The oak-lined steel tank was used as water storage for decades and eventually leaked too badly to be repaired. The tower was salvaged March 1992.

School Building (Building T-208, constructed 1942, one contributing building)

The school building is a long rectangular gable-roofed building on a concrete slab foundation. Corrugated metal covers the roof and the exterior walls. The windows are eight-over-eight-light wood-frame, double-hung style. The building is oriented perpendicular to "A" Avenue, north of the wash stand (T-205) and across from the air corps warehouse (T-301). The entrance to the building consists of a small, shed-roofed enclosed entry with a centered five-panel wood pedestrian door on the east end of the north elevation. West of the entry, two windows are evenly spaced across the north elevation. There is no fenestration across the west elevation. The south elevation features two evenly-spaced windows and a centered metal overhead door within an original opening.

This building was designated as the training building or school house. It remains in its original location. It is 100 x 20 feet in size and is currently being used as a storage facility by Glacier County. The interior still shows signs of the original construction, plus it maintains the ventilation cupola on the roof which was part of the original design. This was also intended as a temporary building and is constructed of a concrete slab floor, with 2 x 4 inch wall and roof construction on 16" centers. A pressed insulation product called Celotex covers the interior walls. This was one of the "fancier" buildings, especially compared to the barracks, as the men spent many hours there for didactic training, before going into the field locations. Coal-burning stoves were probably used to keep the building tolerable in the severe Montana winter. The exterior walls are constructed of ½" thick "shiplap" boards covered with heavy tar-paper held in place with 1 ½" flat wooden lath strips nailed in place. These materials are still present beneath the metal siding.

Air Corps Warehouse (Building T-301, constructed 1942, one contributing building)

Originally used as the Air Corps Warehouse, this 50' x 108' side-gable building rests on a concrete pad foundation. Roof and wall framing is of 2x4s, and shiplap, covered with tar paper and narrow lath, historically covered the exterior walls. Modern metal siding now covers the exterior and roof. Though the siding is modern, the massing and design of the original building are still intact and visible. Fenestration is limited to the east elevation, which contains two evenly-spaced modern overhead doors within original openings. There are single metal pedestrian doors within original openings at both the north and south ends of the elevation. The south elevation has no openings. The west elevation features a pedestrian door at the south side. A wood-frame, metal-sided addition on the north elevation connects the Air Corps Warehouse to the Quarter Master's warehouse (Building T-302) immediately north.

Quarter Master Warehouse (Building T-302, constructed 1942, one non-contributing building)

This building was originally the Quarter Master Warehouse. It is 32' x 95' in size and an addition has been made to its south elevation, which bridges this building with the Air Corps Warehouse (T-301). Currently, it is being used as garage and storage space for the airport. It features a shallow side-gable roof covered with modern metal sheeting. Modern metal siding also covers the exterior walls, though the original shiplap, tar paper, and lath are present underneath. The original openings across the east (front) elevation have been changed, and the facade now displays five overhead garage doors, instead of the original four openings. The four larger doors are evenly-spaced across the center of the elevation. The fifth is slightly smaller and located at the north side of the east elevation. There are no openings across the north and west elevations. The building features an unusual roofline, in that the upper approximately three feet of the building overhangs the rest by a few inches, giving the appearance of a shoebox. Because of the substantial change in fenestration patterns since the historic period, it is a non-contributing building within the historic district.

Quarter Master Warehouse and Post Engineer's Office (Building T-303, constructed 1942, one contributing building)

The Quarter Master Warehouse and Engineer's Office is at the north end of the building cluster, immediately north of the Quarter Master warehouse (T-302). It measures 32' x 95' and rests on a concrete pad foundation. Roof and wall framing is of 2x4s, and shiplap, covered with tar paper and narrow lath, historically covered the exterior walls. Corrugated metal panels now cover those

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 3

materials and the shallow side-gabled roof. Like building T-302, T-303 features an unusual roofline, in that the upper approximately three feet of the building overhangs the rest by a few inches, giving the appearance of a shoebox. Three brick chimneys pierce the roof.

The east (front) elevation contains three overhead metal doors within original openings. From, south to north, there are the following openings across the east elevation: a modern, one-by-one sliding window, a wooden pedestrian door, two overhead doors, a ribbon of three wood frame fixed window located just below the roof-wall junction, and the third overhead door. A modern, shallow, shed-roofed overhang, supported by four square posts shelters the south window and pedestrian door. Both the north and south elevations feature modern one-by-one sliding windows at both the east and west sides. The west (rear) elevation retains its original fenestration pattern and materials at the roof-wall junction, consisting of a ribbon of three, four-light wood frame windows to the north, and a pair of identical window off-center to the south. The building is being used currently as the kennel for the City of Cut Bank Humane Officer, and for additional storage. Though there are several modern windows and door within original openings, the fenestration pattern is original, and the building conveys its historic associations.

Armament Building (Building T-401, constructed 1942, one contributing building)

This building was designated as the Armament Building. It was used as storage for the 50 caliber machine guns used on the B-17s and for the M-1 Garand rifles used for drill and security purposes. A coal-fired furnace provided heat for the building, evidenced by the large brick chimney located on the west side of the building. This building has been utilized quite extensively over the past 60 years as a meeting location, and more recently has been rented out for storage. It has fallen into disrepair and is in immediate need of restoration.

Dimensions for the building are 20' x 100' with two shed extensions across the east elevation, and three shed extensions across its west elevation. The construction method is identical to the T-300s buildings – 2x4 wood-framing on a concrete pad foundation. The original shiplap covered with tar paper and lath sheeting is present beneath asbestos tile exterior siding. Modern metal corrugated roofing covers the side gabled roof. The windows are all original four-light, fixed, wood-frame. The east (front) elevation displays its original windows and doors. From south to north, they are two evenly-spaced windows, a pair of wooden pedestrian doors within a shed-roofed extension, three evenly-spaced windows, an overhead door, a pair of wooden doors in a shed extension, and two more evenly-spaced windows. Both the north and south elevations contain two evenly-spaced windows. The west (rear) elevation contains, from north to south, three evenly spaced windows, a small pedestrian entry with a single wood door, the large brick exterior chimney, a 16' square shed extension with a boarded-over overhead door opening to the south, another, but smaller unfenestrated shed extension, and two evenly-spaced windows. The original Celotex wall covering is present on the interior.

Hangar (Building T-501, constructed 1942, one contributing building)

The hangar is the most prominent building in the district. The rectangular, concrete building is 160 feet wide by 120 feet in depth. There is a wood-frame 17' x 160' lean-to across the east (rear) elevation of the hangar which housed two coal-fired furnaces, ancillary offices, and storage spaces. The bases of the trusses are approximately 45 feet above the concrete floor, with the arched roof another 15' above that level.

The construction is a beautiful and functional example of a free-spanned, bowstring arch truss roof, with the 160' width being totally unsupported except at the walls. The walls are of poured concrete reinforced on the exterior by flying buttresses which are also of poured concrete.

The façade (west elevation) of the hangar is dominated by the bowstring truss. At either end of the trusses are poured concrete pockets for the two "horn" doors that spanned the full front of the hangar. The elevation wall contains the original electrically operated door which spans the full width of the building. The doors, when opened, fit into two large concrete enclosures or "pockets" on either side of the building, and resemble the pleats of an accordion. While the original door still exists, it is not operational and a large door approximately 20' x 80' has been installed, which is centered on the west wall. This door is in use today to allow entry by private aircraft as well as smaller commercial aircraft. Single small pedestrian doors are located at either end of the elevation.

The north and south elevations each contain five ribbons of original windows, one set of four, 9-over-9 light wood-frame windows with 6-light transoms above, between each of the buttresses. A concrete beam above the windows spans between the columns. Above the concrete beam are four more sets of nine over nine sash windows, currently covered by corrugated metal panels. The east elevation of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 4

the concrete hangar features twenty-three 9-over-9 wood-frame windows with 9-light transoms above. These windows provide light from the upper half of the elevation. The lower half of the elevation features a shed-roofed, asbestos-tiled wood frame bay across its width. The frame extension features twenty-two wood-frame, six-over-six-light double-hung windows. There is a single wood pedestrian door and a pair of doors on the north side of the frame extension. The extension's south elevation features a pair of doors to the east and a single six-over-six window to the west.

A yet unsubstantiated comment is that this hangar was, in fact, made larger to accommodate the B-29 Superfortress. This is definitely a possibility since the height of the vertical stabilizer (tail) of the B-17 is only 25 feet high, while the B-29 is 34 feet high. The original door could handle that with a few feet to spare. The 141 foot wingspan of the B-29 could easily have been accommodated by the 160 foot wide hangar door. The opportunity never arose to see if the B-29 would fit in this hangar, as a Superfortress has never landed at the base.

The hangar is in good condition today although some work needs to be done on the windows and exterior siding, and the 17' x 160' addition on the East end of the building. The hangar roof was recently recovered with a thermally bonded vinyl roofing material which should last for many decades.

Control Tower Footings (Structure T-502, constructed 1942, one contributing site)

T-502 was the 64' control tower that was built on the southwest corner of the hangar. During the war, it was used as the visual and radio control tower for the B-17s stationed at the base. After the war, c. 1963, the control building was removed and the platform was used to mount a large beacon. Airport authorities removed the beacon, and only the footings, set 15' apart, remain.

Equipment Vault (Structure T-603, constructed 1942, one contributing structure)

This is the only underground structure located on the base. It is approximately 20' x 20' in size and was used as a transformer and electrical switching location. It is made of concrete and still contains some of the original electrical equipment. Most of the secondary, or low voltage, wiring for the base was underground which originated in this vault. It suffers from periodic flooding but is restorable. Access is gained via a deteriorating wooden hatch, approximately three feet by four feet. A ventilation pipe protrudes from the ground just northeast of the hatch.

Wind Cone (Structure T-610, constructed 1942, one contributing structure)

The wind cone consists of a series of metal indicators set in a 25'-diameter circle. The indicators are painted red and white, and encircle a 20' iron mast. A striped fabric wind cone flies from the mast, indicating the wind direction.

Sewage Treatment System (Structure(s) T-801, T-801A, T-802, T-803 and T-804, constructed 1942, five contributing structures)

These structures are part of the sewage treatment system designed for a maximum capacity of 3,000 men in the event that the base was completely occupied. It consists of T-801 and T-801A, an Imhoff Cone Tank and dosing tank, T-802 sprinkler filter, T-803 secondary clarifier, and T-804 sludge drying bed. The entire system is located on the east side of the district and is still in use. T-801 is a circular concrete open storage tank, set into the ground. Raw sewage enters the T-801 which functions as a two-stage septic tank. Anaerobic bacterial digestion partially clarifies the liquid. Sludge that settles to the bottom passes to T-804, the Sludge Drying Bed. When the sludge is dry it can be removed. The clearer liquid remains on top and overflows into T-801A, the dosing tank. The dosing tank contains a pump that passes liquid on to T-802, the sprinkling filter. The filter consists of a large, square platform of sand and gravel that allows the liquid to come in contact with the air, where aerobic bacterial action takes place. Liquids that pass through the sprinkling filter go on into T-803, the secondary clarifier. Here more anaerobic digestion takes place before the liquid is discharged from the system into a drain field.

Road System (constructed 1942, one contributing structure)

The layout of the base street system is still apparent and in use at the airport. The roads were built in a grid pattern, with numbered streets running east-west and lettered avenues running north-south. The layout is a good representation of Army Air Force Base design. The roads served to not only provide orderly circulation, but also to define the use areas within the building cluster. Warehouses (T-300 series resources) were located north of First Street and west of A Avenue. Resources associated with training and base physical function (T-200 series resources) were/are located east of A Avenue and north of Second Street. Enlisted men's

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 5

buildings (T-100 series resources) were located east of A Avenue between Second and Fifth Streets. Officer's buildings were located at the south end of the cantonment, east of A Avenue between Fifth and Sixth Streets. Administrative Buildings (T-400 series) were/are located west of A Avenue between First Street and Third Street. The Hangar and Beacon (T-500 series resources) were/are located west of A Avenue between Third and Fourth Streets. Aviation support buildings (T-600 series resources) were/are situated west of A Avenue between Fourth and Sixth Streets. E Avenue extends southeast from the east edge of the building cluster to the T-800 series structures. The streets were historically unpaved. Currently, Second Street, Fourth Street, and that portion of "A" Avenue east of the hangar and terminal are paved with asphalt. The rest of "A" Avenue, Fifth Street, Sixth Street and the access road at the northeast portion of the building cluster, are graveled.

Hardstands (constructed 1942, eight contributing structures)

The hardstands were a series of twelve, 74' diameter circular concrete pads strategically positioned north and south of the hangar, off Taxiway C. Eight remain intact. The hardstands exhibit steel anchor plates that were used to tether the B-17 bombers that were stationed at the airfield from 1942 to 1943. The positioning of the hardstands spatially separated the B-17's in the event of an attack on one of the airplanes. If one of the planes was sabotaged, strafed, or bombed the remainder might be far enough removed to not be effected. The hardstands are numbered here from 1 through 8 beginning at the southwest end of the taxiway and advancing northeasterly. The hardstands are contributing structures within the National Register district.

Runway Complex (6 taxiways, 3 runways, 1 apron, 1 drainage system, constructed c. 1941-1942, eleven contributing structures)

The complex consists of a series of runways and taxiways associated with the original airfield, the Army Air Force Base, and the municipal airport. Most of the runways and taxiways were constructed in 1942 and situated on built up grades. The base runways and taxiways were originally constructed to be 150 feet in width. A French drainage system wicks water down through a series of grates at the grades, and away from the runways and taxiways. Runways 13-31 and 5-23 (aka 4-22) currently and paved to 75' width, intersect near the center of the district. Taxiway A connects the southwest corner of the apron west of the hangar to the intersection of runways 13-31 and 5-23. Taxiway C, also called runway 18-36, runs north-northeast-south-southwest, perpendicular to Taxiway A, from the south end of runway 13-31 to the north end of runway 4-22. Taxiway B is relatively short, connecting the northwest corner of the apron to Taxiway C. Taxiways D and E lead from Taxiway C to the hardstands north and south of the apron area, respectively. Another taxiway historically ran from the north end for Taxiway C, paralleled the north side of Runway 4-22, then turned to parallel Runway 13-31's east side, then turned to follow the long runway at the northwest end of the district. This more remote runway was used only rarely by base personnel, as it took considerable time and fuel to taxi to and from that part of the base. The remote runway and taxiway are not longer maintained, but still clearly visible on the landscape.

Terminal Building (constructed 1948, one contributing building)

In 1948, the Army conveyed its property at the base to the City of Cut Bank and Glacier County. Functioning solely as a commercial airport and port of entry again, and because much of the Army Air Force base infrastructure was salvaged, a new terminal building was constructed. Still in use today, the terminal is located southwest of the hangar. The Modern, brick building is L-shaped, with a smaller, wood-frame office level and a viewing and control tower atop the west "leg" of the "L." The building features aluminum-frame, multi-light casement windows and metal doors throughout. The control tower features floor-to ceiling picture windows on each side, for an unobstructed view of the area. The building rests on a concrete wall foundation. Metal double doors provide access from the crux of the "L" on the east elevation. The east elevation features two eight-light and one smaller three-light window south of the doors, as well as two eight-light and two six-light windows across the north bay. Above, the second story east elevation features a six-light window, metal door cross its south bay. Large picture windows flank a centered one-over-one double hung window in the north bay.

The south elevation has a centered, one-light pedestrian door in its west bay. The east bay features, from west to east, two three-light windows and four eight-light windows. Above, the second story's south elevation features a brick exterior chimney to the east side. To the west, there is a nine-light and six-light metal-framed window.

Concrete Block Hangar (one non-contributing building)

Across the flight apron directly north of the terminal building is large hangar with bowstring truss roof. Its large sliding metal door faces south toward the apron. Six concrete pilasters divided both the east and west elevations into five bays. The south four bay each

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 6

contain a centered window opening, two in-filled with wood, the other two with eight-light metal frame windows. The north (rear) elevation contains no fenestration. The hangar post-dates the WWII period, and likely the 1958 close of the period of significance. It is therefore considered a non-contributing building.

Modern Aircraft Sheds (two non-contributing buildings)

Long, narrow, wood-frame sheds for storing aircraft are located at the north and south ends of the building cluster. Taxiways D and E provide access to these shed-roofed hangar/garages that feature corrugated metal roofing and siding, and overhead doors within each of the multiple bays. Two of the buildings, one along Taxiway E south of the apron and the other on the west side of taxiway D, are long, narrow rectangular buildings multiple bays wide and one bay deep. They feature shed roofs from slope west, and large sliding metal doors across the east elevations provide the only access. Constructed in the 1990s, none of these buildings feature windows.

Modern Side-Gabled Support Buildings (three non-contributing buildings)

Within the building cluster are three gable-roofed, rectangular, modern buildings. Each features metal roofing and siding. One is located east of the north aircraft shed, another north of the armament building T-401 and south of Air Corps warehouse T-301. The third is located northeast of the school building T-208. The building east of the aircraft shed is a large rectangular building with fenestration limited to the north elevation, where large sliding doors provide entry.

The Glacier County Weed Control Building, north of T-401, features four overhead garage doors spaced across the north 4/5 of the east elevation. South of these doors is a single pedestrian door flanked by a one-light, fixed window. The south elevation features a single one-light window at its east side. The north and west elevations have no fenestration.

The County Garage is a front-gabled building northwest of T-208. Openings are limited to the south (front) elevation, and includes a metal overhead garage bay door to the west, and a one-light pedestrian door off-center to the east. A metal stovepipe protrudes from high in the center of the west slope.

County Road Superintendent's House (one-non-contributing building)

East of the school building T-208 and wash stand T-205, mature trees protect a front-gabled, wood-frame building from the airport's omnipresent winds. The one-story building faces the County Garage, and is one bay wide and two bays deep. The roofline of the south bay is slightly higher than the front, north bay. Asphalt shingles cover the roofs, and wide, lapped metal siding covers the exterior walls. The north elevation features a pedestrian door to the east, and a large, two-light casement to the west. The west elevation features two one-by-one, metal-framed sliders in the south half of the north bay. The south bay contains a one-by-one slider on the north side, and a large picture window at the south end. The south elevation contains a small gabled entry extension off-center to the west. The extension has a pedestrian door in its east elevation. The building's east elevation features two evenly-spaced window openings across its south bay. Glacier County moved this building into the airport complex after the historic period for use as a residence.

Small-scale sheds (not counted)

Throughout the building cluster, there are several small scale modern wood-frame sheds, covered with metal siding and roofing. Because of their small scale, they are not counted as resources in this nomination.

Integrity

The Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base Historic District retains sufficient integrity to convey its important associations with the history of transportation, military history, and community development. A great number of the WWII-era buildings were salvaged by the Army after 1948, when the base was abandoned. The remaining buildings were finished with metal or asbestos siding to make them usable for the municipal airport functions through the 1950s. Several non-contributing buildings are present in the district, but with the exception of the terminal, they are of similar materials, design, and massing as the historic resources, and do not overly detract from the district.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 7

Structures at the Cut Bank Army Air Force Base – 1946-1948-prior to salvage

T-101	Administration Building	T-4	Underground gas storage & pump (privately owned)
T-103	PX and Post Office	T-401	Armament Building
T-105	Lavatory EM (Enlisted Men's)	T-402	Crew Chief Building
T-106	Barracks EM	T-405	All Purpose Shop
T-107	Barracks EM	T-501	Large Hangar
T-108	Mess Hall MLT	T-502	Control Hangar
T-110	Squadron Supply	T-601	Operations & Alert Building
T-111	Dispensary	T-602	C.A.A. Building
T-111A	Dispensary storage room	T-603	Equipment Vault
T-113	Lavatory EM	T-604	Guard House
T-122	Lavatory EM	T-605	Bomb Storage
T-123	Barracks EM	T-606	Sentry Box
T-123A	Lavatory joining T-123 & 124	T-609	Hydrogen Supply & Theodolite Building
T-124	Barracks EM	T-610	Wind Sock (Cone)
T-125	Barracks EM	T-701	Beacon Tower
T-126	Barracks EM	T-702	Recreation Center –Officers
T-127	Barracks EM	T-703	Officers Quarters
T-128	Barracks EM	T-704	Officers Quarters
T-128A	Lavatory joining T-128 & 129	T-705	Officers Quarters
T-129	Barracks EM	T-706	Officers Quarters
T-130	Mess Hall EM	T-707	Officers Quarters
T-131	Recreation Center EM	T-708	Officers Quarters
T-132	Barracks EM	T-709	Officers Quarters
T-132A	Lavatory joining T-132 & 133	T-710	Officers Quarters
T-138	Barracks EM	T-712	Officers Lavatory
T-201	Crash Shed – aka Fire Hall	T-718	Officers Lavatory
T-202	Underground gas storage & pump	T-720	**same building as T-718**
T-203	Transportation Shop & Motor Pool (5 stall garage)	T-801	Imhoff Tank
T-204	Grease Rack	T-801A	Dosing Tank
T-205	Wash Stand	T-802	Sprinkling Filter
T-206	Oil & Dope Storage Shed	T-803	Secondary Clarifier
T-207	Beacon Tower & overhead Water Storage	T-804	Sludge Drying Bed
T-208	School Building	T-901	Barracks EM
T-209	Camouflage Instruction Building	T-902	Barracks EM
T-210	US (Base) Engineer's Office	T-903	Barracks EM
T-301	AC Warehouse	T-904	Barracks EM
T-301A	Link Trainer	T-905	Barracks EM
T-302	Quartermaster Warehouse	T-906	Barracks EM
T-303	Post Engineer & QM Warehouse	T-910	Lavatory joining T-901 & 902
T-304	Pump House(water from Johnson's well)	T-911	Lavatory joining T-903 & 904
T-305	Guard House	T-912	Lavatory joining T-905 & 906
T-305A	Shed	T-920	Skeet Range
T-306	Plumbing Shop	T-1001	Coal Storage
T-307	Machine Shop	T-1101	Small Arms Building
T-308	Storage Shed	T-1102	Pyrotechnics Building
T-308A	Forming Machine Building	T-1103	Privy
T-309	Shed	T-1401	Sentry Box

DRAFT

Section number 7 Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base Page 8
Glacier County, MT

T-1402	(Main Gate Checkpoint)	X-1205	Asphalt heating and storage tank
T-1501	Settling Basin (possibly at river??)	X-1206	Storage Yard
T-1502	Pump House (" " " " " ")	X-1301	Obstacle Course
T-1502A	Gas House (Chlorine??)	X-1302	Pistol Range
X-139	Flag Pole	X-1402	Privy
X-503	Flare Shed	73	Construction Shack
X-611	Platform	78	Construction Shack
X-1201	Construction Shack	174	Construction Shack
X-1202	Construction Shack		
X-1203	Construction Shack		Western Airlines Office
X-1204	Construction Shack		U.S. Customs Office

T-111 & T-111A	Dispensary, 25' x 124', with 9' x 26' addition and (1) 6' x 7' and (2) 6' x 17' porches. <i>Torn down for salvage by Ken Grim late 1991</i>
T-131	E.M. Recreation Hall, 40' x 132'. <i>Present, but in disrepair. Currently not in use.</i>
T-201	Fire Station (aka Crash Shed) 32' x 48' with 26' x 56' and 8' x 12' additions. <i>Demolished by Maynard Nygaard & son, January 1992 – slab remains.</i>
T-203	Motor Repair Shop (Motor Pool). 32' x 88' with 18' x 54' addition. <i>Presently being used by the county road department.</i>
T-206	Oil Storage & Dope Shack, 15' x 16' with 7' x 12' addition. <i>Present, in private use by county road department superintendent.</i>
T-207	Water Tower, 104'7" high. <i>Chester Heitman salvaged iron March 1992 (concrete leg pillars remain).</i>
T-208	School House OBAT (Mod), 20' x 100' with additions and (2) 4' x 5' storm porches. <i>Present, in use by the country road department.</i>
T-209	Camouflage Instruction (W. H. E. T.), 5-4' x 96'. <i>Gone!</i>
T-301	A. C. Warehouse, 50' x 108'. <i>Occupied by County, circa November 1963.</i>
T-303	Q. M. Warehouse, 32' x 95'. <i>Occupied by City of Cut Bank</i>
T-309	Shack 6' x 10'. <i>Gone!</i>
T-401	Armament Building, 20' x 100' with 12' x 16' additions. <i>Presently leased by Gary Quenzer (needs repairs)</i>
T-402	Crew Chief (O. B. A. T. through R, B-B-T), 20 x 100'. <i>Gone.</i>
T-501	Hangar, 120' x 160' with 17' x 160' addition. <i>Present, used by the airport.</i>
T-502	Control Tower, 15' x 15' x 64'. <i>Demolished & salvaged lumber circa July 1963. Pillar support remains.</i>
T-601	Operations Building, 20' x 100'. <i>Arnold Dirkes moved building to Jim Printy's late 1981.</i>
T-602	Alert Building, 20' x 25'. <i>Gone.</i>
T-603	Equipment Vault, 10'6" x 16' x 10'. <i>Present, not in use.</i>
T-605	Bombsight Storage, RSS-1 (Vaults), 11' x 13'. <i>Demolished and buried on site.</i>
T-610	Wind Cone, 25' diameter with 20' iron mast. <i>Present, in use by airport.</i>
T-801 & Y-801A	Imhoff Tank, 30' x 26' and Dosing Tank, 5' x 8' x 10'6". <i>Present, still in service.</i>

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 9

-
- T-802 Sprinkling Filter, Secondary, 42'6" x 43'4" x 7'. *Present, not enough volume to keep it functioning.*
- T-803 Clarifier, 20' x 14'. *Present, not enough volume to keep it functioning.*
- T-804 Sludge Drying Bed, 32' x 32'. *Present, not enough volume to keep it functioning.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 10

Early History of the Cut Bank Area

Cut Bank is located within lands historically associated with the Blackfeet. The Blackfoot Confederacy consists of four different tribes, the Pikuni/Peigan, North Peigan Pikuni, Blood/Kainai, and Blackfoot/Siksika. Members of the Blackfoot Confederation presently live in Montana, the United States and Alberta, Canada. Before the arrival of non-Indians from the East, the tribes had long controlled a vast territory.

Our traditional territory extended from Ponokasisahta (Elk River, now called the North Saskatchewan River) south to Otahkoitahtayi (the Yellowstone River). We lived along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains and eastward beyond Omahskispatsikoyii (the Great Sand Hills in what is now called Saskatchewan). It is an immense land with some of the richest natural resources in the world.

We knew every detail of this land. Our people traveled constantly throughout it, and their trails were well marked across the grasslands. They lived by hunting game and collecting plants. By moving camp frequently, they were able to avoid depleting the resources in any one area. Our people knew the places where different plants grew and where game was plentiful. Their lives were nomadic, but their movements were not aimless; they always traveled with a purpose.¹

As non-Indian trappers and traders began to infiltrate their territory, the Blackfeet way of life altered significantly. By the mid-1800s, decimation of the buffalo, smallpox, and other scourges took their toll on the tribes' ability to retain their traditional lifeways and territory. In 1855, the first of a series of "treaties" between the U.S. government and the tribes resulted in the eventual establishment of the Blackfeet Reservation. Subsequent agreements greatly reduced the Blackfeet-controlled lands.

The buffalo had disappeared by 1880. A drought and a worldwide depression made it hard for us to be successful farmers. We were forced to rely on government rations for survival. This increased our dependency on the kinnoona (Indian Agent). It was another blow to our morale.²

Great Northern Railroad Arrives [text for this section written by Dennis Seglem]

In the autumn of 1890, Great Northern Railroad crews reached the site of present day Cut Bank very close to where Lewis' party camped. While construction crews stopped to construct the wooden trestle over Cut Bank Creek, a small temporary railroad construction camp emerged. After the crews completed the bridge and track, they moved on.

The Great Northern soon established a station at Cut Bank, located on the west side of the trestle. A small settlement grew around the station, which was nothing more than a box car converted into a depot. In the depot, a telegrapher manned the telegraph over which he copied train orders and gave instructions to each train. During this period, stations were located every five to ten miles apart. On December 14, 1892, a post office was established with John K. Stauffer as postmaster. The post office was located in the salt box style section worker's house. Sections gangs were stationed at intervals along the Great Northern. Each gang was responsible for the repair and maintenance of an assigned section of track. There was also a water tank to provide water for the steam engines. The 1894-1895 Montana Business Directory listed Cut Bank having a general store operated by G. H. Kurdvek but this business didn't last long. During these years, Cut Bank's population was 26, with most of the people except for the railroad workers living on nearby sheep and cattle ranches.

During the summer of 1900, the Great Northern employed 250 men at Cut Bank working on track improvements, working in the quarry and building a new steel bridge to replace the wooden one. Rumors were out that the railroad planned on moving the roundhouse and division point from nearby Blackfoot to Cut Bank and expanding the facility. In those days division points were located every 100 miles to keep the steam engines in repair. Businessmen began locating in Cut Bank to serve the temporary workforce present but hoped that the rumor would become reality. The August 23 edition of the *Shelby News* announced that the

1 "Our Traditional Territory," Glenbow Museum website, http://www.glenbow.org/blackfoot/EN/html/how_we_lived_with_the_land.htm.

2 Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 11

bridge was completed and that engine 522 with 25 cars of dirt was the first train to cross the new bridge. The paper also announced that

parties in from Cut Bank state that the Great Northern railway have a large force of men at work at that point grading side tracks preparing the ground for the erection of a roundhouse, etc., and that before many months end, the division will be changed from Blackfoot to Cut Bank. If this is true, and we have no reason to doubt it, Cut Bank will be one of the best little towns in Northern Montana.³

The Great Northern finished the 32 stall roundhouse, coal chute, hotel, and other facilities by mid to late December 1900. Cut Bank's population grew to about 300. Two years later in February 1902, Choteau's *Montanian* described that

quite a nice little town has sprung up there, and today, although scarcely two years old, it boasts of two hotels, one run under the management of Archie McDonald, and the other conducted by the Great Northern Railway for the convenience of its employees; two well-conducted merchandise establishments –the P. P. Lee Mercantile Company and the Cut Bank Mercantile Company owned by Halverson and Titus; three saloons- the "Owl", run by Philip Gilboe, the "Maverick" owned by George T. Brown, and John F. Thompson's place, a livery stable owned by A. E. Allison; a barbershop and bathroom run by O. E. Crowley. George W. Walker, one of the Great Northern Railway Company's operators, is the justice of the peace and Mrs. Walker is postmistress.⁴

Cut Bank Expands [text for this section written by Dennis Seglem]

Besides being a railroad community, Cut Bank was a supply point for open range cattle and sheep ranches. The Circle, DHS, Narrow Gauge and F outfits were some of the larger cattle ranching companies. Some of the sheep ranchers included Potter, Miller, MacRae, and the F Company. Each June for about a month a shearing plant with 20 shearing machines operated in Cut Bank. In 1904, between 40 and 50 thousand sheep were shorn at the Cut Bank plant. Just a mile east of Cut Bank was Baltic, a shipping point for cattle and sheep. Cattle outfits would ship anywhere from a carload to a trainload of beef at a time from the Baltic stockyards. In the fall, these cattle outfits would conduct their annual roundups.

By 1910, Cut Bank grew to a population of 518. In 1909, the area around Cut Bank was opened up to homesteading. A transition was taking place. The open range cattle and sheep ranching industries were being replaced with fenced in homesteads and ranches. Homesteading brought farm families, many of which with northern European backgrounds that included German and Scandinavian. Many people moved in from the Midwest, especially Wisconsin and Minnesota. These homesteaders hoped to create prosperous farms from the arid prairie. Despite the dry conditions, they saw advantages in free land as well as land that was already free of trees. Homesteaders depended upon the merchants of Cut Bank to supply their farms with lumber, household goods and food. In return the homesteaders shipped their farm produce from Cut Bank. Many fine masonry commercial buildings were built during these years.

Walking the streets of Cut Bank in 1910 was a multi-cultural experience. The railroad found a shortage of workers in the area to staff its division point. Homesteaders were too busy developing their farms to want to work for the railroad. To solve the problem, the Great Northern encouraged immigrant labor. Besides hearing English, you would hear Japanese, Bulgarian and Italian as well as a host of other languages.

Area farm families struggled through an agricultural depression that began in 1917 with a long term drought and drop in grain prices. Many farmers lost their farms, either unable to afford taxes or repay loans. Others kept their farms but had to find supplemental incomes. Now they welcomed the railroad jobs.

By 1920, Cut Bank's population had grown to 1,180. Through the years, the Great Northern gradually expanded and improved its railroad division point. Then on May 4, 1928 the Cut Bank *Pioneer Press* announced

Whistle (at the roundhouse) will toot for the last time tomorrow (Saturday) promptly at 12:00. Preparations are going steadily ahead for the abandonment of the local terminal. Track is being taken up rapidly now. The

3 *Shelby News*, August 23, 1900.

4 *Montanian*, February 1902, Choteau, MT.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 12

“Beanery” (The GN Hotel) one of our ancient shrines, closed Wednesday and the management distributed dozens of delectable pies and other perishable things to patrons.⁵

Soon after this announcement, Cut Bank saw its population fall by 300 down to 874. In addition, many farmers lost their supplemental income earned from railroad employment. These were challenging times for the residents of Cut Bank.

However, prosperity for Cut Bank was on the horizon. In the early 1920s, the oil and gas boom began north of Shelby, Montana, in the Kevin/Sunburst/Oilmont area. By 1928, exploratory wells were being drilled around Cut Bank, 24 miles to the west. Production began in the summer of 1931. The residents of Cut Bank quickly realized the positive economic implications and rejoiced with a community Gas Day celebration.

While most of America suffered through the Great Depression, Cut Bank grew and prospered during the 1930s. At first, Cut Bank was an oil boom town. Many oil workers came north from the Oklahoma and Texas oilfields to work for the small wildcat companies that were operating in and around Cut Bank. When they arrived they found housing shortages. Houses were being built and moved in from other locations. Oil camps, like Santa Rite, Adams, and Tipville, sprung up around Cut Bank. Local farmers found work in the oilfields, so once again they could supplement their farm incomes and continue to build their farms.

During the 1930s, the population of Cut Bank rose from 847 to 2,509 in 1940s. During the late 1930s and early 1940s, larger oil companies began buying out smaller ones. These companies began to invest in Cut Bank, building permanent facilities and bringing stable employment. Cut Bank advertised itself as the “Oil Capital of Montana.”

During the late 1930s and early 1940s, many homes were built to house the incoming population. Cut Bank strived to build prestigious new public buildings to reflect its new preeminence as an “oil city.” The city tried to convince the Great Northern Railroad to build a new railroad station that would emulate the city’s prosperity. The GN however, struggling through the great depression, objected. Cut Bank had to settle with the railroad remodeling and modernizing the old Cut Bank station.

As Cut Bank prospered, local entrepreneurs looked for ways to improve the community’s economic position even more by further establishing it as a transportation hub by developing an airport.

Aviation and the Establishment of Cut Bank Municipal Airport

The Armistice ending WWI in November 1918 brought forth a new era in Civil Aviation, as a large number of trained fliers were released from the military back into civilian life. Their military careers may have ended, but their love of and desire to fly stayed with them as they returned to their homes and jobs.

These “footloose” pilots began to appear all across the country. Some were referred to as “barnstormers”, mainly due to their daring and quite often reckless antics, while others were aware of the many potential commercial and profitable uses for their aviation talents. The most prevalent problem of the time was that there were no laws or regulations in place, at either the federal or state levels, to control or protect the aviators and the public.

The first laws to regulate Civil Aviation appeared in Montana in 1929. At that time, Dr. C. H. Minette, a prominent dentist from Cut Bank, was elected to the state legislature and served on the state’s first aviation committee. Dr. Minnette was also a recently discharged veteran and was a member of the newly formed American Legion. This gave him opportunities to come in contact with many of the new civilian aviators and gain knowledge of their problems and needs. There were several private aviators in the area around Cut Bank. Dr. Minette visualized a need for private and commercial aviation projects in the area to help support the agricultural economy and the new and rapidly growing oilfields surrounding Cut Bank. He started a campaign to establish a commercial airport near Cut Bank. He realized that it would be a difficult battle to win recognition for such a small rural community, but he and his allies felt it would be a battle worth waging. Minette remembered in 1955:

About this time, and even before, Tag Mulumby, Tom Busha and Earl Vance, al of Great Falls, with many others of this area, discussed the possibility of an air line to Alaska. It was with grandiose idea in mind that we, here in Cut Bank, took the initiative to try and be part of such a venture.

⁵ *Pioneer Press*, May 4, 1928, Cut Bank, MT.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 13

Naturally it was difficult to receive recognition in aviation circles. However, through persistence and close friendship with the men in those circles Cut Bank eventually was given recognition in the development of aviation in the northwest.⁶

In 1930, local oilman and pilot Tip O'Neil, leased a parcel of land southwest of town and constructed a private airstrip there. O'Neil allowed local pilots to use the runway, and to construct small shelters for their planes. Until 1937, Cut Bank was unable to spend monies outside the city limits, so a municipal airport was not feasible. Later in 1938, the city was able to negotiate its first lease for the airport land.

As early as 1932-33 Western and Inland Airlines were interested in establishing an international flight connection between Great Falls and Alaska. Western Airlines operated a franchise in Browning but only utilized it during the summer months. The Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA – later the Civil Aeronautics Board, CAB) denied their requests until March 1941. Voters in Cut Bank overwhelming supported a \$17,000 bond for airport expansion the following month.

Negotiations had been in progress with Western Airlines, which had been asked to provide commercial service to the new airport. Simultaneously, a dialog had been started with the federal government to establish the airport as a “port of entry” which would require stopping at Cut Bank for customs services. The new facility would then be a logical point for flights into Canada with connections to Alaska. Dr. Minnette’s hard work came to fruition when Western Airlines, with much fanfare and ceremony from local townspeople, made its inaugural flight to Cut Bank on June 1, 1941. Service from Western Airlines, using the venerable Douglas DC-3, would continue through the war, and into the mid 1950s.

Cut Bank Army Air Force Base

Just over two months after the inaugural flight, on August 22, 1941, Secretary of War Henry L. Stinson and General George C. Marshall landed in Cut Bank. After “encircling the field in company with Donald S. Libby and members of the local airport commission”⁷ the men continued on for a Glacier Park vacation. A month later, the United States Congress approved the purchase of reservation land by the City of Cut Bank.

The United States of America in Congress assembled, that the Secretary of the Interior, under such regulations as he may proscribe, is authorized to sell to the City of Cut Bank, Montana, all right, title, and interest of the United States and of certain individual Indians of the Blackfeet Tribe of Indians, upon obtaining the consent of such individual Indians to such sale...⁸

The city acquired the 760 acres grass and hay fields from the Blackfeet on October 20, 1941. On December 8, 1941, Cut Bank offered the airport for “any use possible” to aid in the war effort. General “Hap” Arnold accepted the next day, and the U.S. government set about acquiring additional land around the airport. In two takings, the US seized 931.09 acres, and purchased an additional 15.97 acres. The project also used 1934.02 leased acres and 33.73 acres in easement. In June 1942 plans were implemented for the construction of the “Cut Bank Army Air Force Base.” On July 6, 1942, the 2nd Air Force authorized the construction of the Great Falls Army Air Force Base (GFAAB). It would be the main base, with three satellite bases to be located at Cut Bank, Glasgow, and Lewistown.

The Army assigned Major John L. Eaton base commander over all the Montana bases, and, for the most part, he remained in Great Falls. Each satellite base had two permanent staff officers to oversee their installations. The GFAAB was designated as the 352nd Squadron and was policed by the 994th Guard Squadron. Lt. Claude D. Stanley and Lt. Bruce B. Raymond were Cut Bank’s first staff officers. Major T. K. Meyers became the base commander of Cut Bank Army Air Force Base (CBAAB) in October 1942.

Basic plans for air base construction had been previously developed, as many such projects were going on throughout the United States. Plans had been made well before the nation entered the war. Usually, just a few changes might be necessary to adapt to the different locations and specific assignments. Construction began in July 1942 at all four locations.

⁶ C.H. Minette, “Cut Bank Airport – Community Project,” *Pioneer Press*, July 21, 1955.

⁷ “War Secretary, Head of Army Land Cut Bank Airport; Vacation in Park,” *Pioneer Press*, August 29, 1941.

⁸ [Public Law 257] 55 Stat. 731.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 14

Capt. G. C. Cooper was in charge of construction, and authorized to make any changes to the original plans as he deemed necessary. These changes would invariably benefit or speed the project along and improve the conditions for the flight crew training that was soon to follow. One of the unconfirmed changes at the CBAAF was to raise the ceiling and enlarge the huge hangar door in anticipation of possible use to house the B-29 Superfortress. The B-29's tail was nine feet higher than that of the B-17.

The CBAAF "satellite" base was located three miles southwest of town. The location was ideal as there was plenty of room for very long runways to accommodate the B-17s. One of the runways, which runs parallel to U. S. Highway 2 is 8400 feet long. There was also plentiful room to house and maintain the needed base personnel and flight squadrons that would be arriving even before the base was completed.

The usual size of the squadrons was expected to be nine B-17s, with crew training of 37 officers and 229 enlisted men. One B-17 fit inside the hangar, and the other twelve parked outside on the hardstands. The officer's quarters were 100' x 20' and were to house 16 men, while the enlisted men's quarters were the same size and housed 32 men. The enlisted men's mess could seat up to 500. The base dispensary was 120' x 24' and included quarters for the base surgeon. The administration building was 100' x 20'. Base contractor was the firm of Askevold and Ruud.

The water tower, located near the hangar and recreation hall, was 111' in height and was topped with a 100,000 gallon water tank. The contract for the tower and tank was awarded to local oilfield contractor, J. Hugo Aronson. After the war, Aronson, sometimes known as the "Galloping Swede", would eventually become Montana's governor. A large rotating beacon was installed on top of the tank. Later, the beacon was moved to the top of the control tower, at the southwest corner of the hangar. After the conclusion of the war, the beacon was relocated to the top of the western end of the hangar, where it still operates today. The tower was torn down after the new commercial administration and control tower were completed in 1948. Airport administration officials reused the large glass window in the tower in the 1948 control tower atop the terminal.

For water supply, Glacier Construction Company was hired to drill wells to provide 100 gallons per minute. These wells, located at the nearby Cut Bank River, were connected to the tower and the base distribution system by 7,000 feet of six-inch water line. This system is still in use today. The sewer system contract was awarded to another local company owned by Frank Haas. In typical war-time style the work progressed very rapidly, with a workforce that numbered over 350 local men and military engineers. By the end of October 1942, the base was nearing completion with only furnishings remaining to be delivered.

An "Open House" for the public was authorized for three hours on Sunday, November 1, 1942. A second open house was allowed on Armistice Day, November 11, 1942 when the base was officially activated and declared ready for duty. It had taken less than four months to complete the base and on November 29, 1942 the first troops arrived via the Great Northern Railroad. The B-17s were delayed two weeks due to bad weather.

Establishment and Training at B-17 Airbases

Much of the information for this section comes directly from Bill Callahan's excellent National Register nomination form for the Fairmont Army Airfield in Nebraska.

In 1934, the Boeing Aircraft Company of Seattle, Washington, began construction of a four-engine heavy bomber. Known as Boeing model 299, it first took flight on July 28, 1935. The government ordered production of 13 of these aircraft, then designated the Y1B-17. Delivery of these first production models was between January 11 and August 4, 1937. By the end of the 1930s, the eruption of World War II in Europe led the United States to increase its military production.

Although World War II began for the United States in December of 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Department of War had been preparing for war for several years. By the summer of 1940, the Army Air Corps planned for an enormous expansion of combat aircraft training facilities. By September 1940, the President's Advisory Commission to the Council of National Defense had begun collecting information about potential sites for locating air training facilities throughout the country.⁹

⁹ Bill Callahan, "Fairmont Army Airfield National Register Nomination Form," on file at the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office, Lincoln, NE, 10/22/2002, section 8, continuation page 1; Robert Hurst, "Nebraska Army Airfields, A Pictorial Review," Nebraska History, Summer/Fall, 1995, p.129.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 15

Construction of Army Air Force (the Army Air Corps became the Army Air Forces in June, 1941) training fields were part of a truly massive construction program by and on behalf of the U.S. military just before and during WWII. Immense facilities sprang up within weeks where none before existed. These facilities were located all over the United States. Thrown in among the army and navy training facilities, shipyards, jeep, bomber and tank factories were ammunition plants, ordinance depots and Army Air Force (AAF) training facilities. These facilities were located throughout the central section of the country, and were among the physically largest of the World War II facilities, often requiring the requisition of thousands and even tens of thousands of acres of agricultural land.¹⁰

The immensity of scale and rapidity of completion of WWII facilities nationwide is very difficult to overstate. All over the nation, land was acquired for the construction of industrial, military and support facilities meant to train and arm a vast armed force necessary to fight a land, sea and air war on two fronts. The construction of Air Corps air fields illustrates the spectacular feat of construction and organization on the American home front. In 1939, the Army Air Corps had seventeen air fields in all of the United States. By late 1945, the AAF had nearly *eight hundred* airfields in the continental United States.¹¹

WWII was the first time in history that strategic aerial bombing of enemy military and industrial facilities was attempted in any significant way. With a few important exceptions airplanes were a largely untested and, in some quarters, controversial weapon of war. Much of the controversy over the airplane as weapon centered on whether strategic bombing was an effective means of waging war. However, many authorities in the United States military observed the effectiveness of air power in Germany's role in the Spanish Civil War and in the Japanese subjugation of much of China. These observations led to the urgent development of many very effective types of military aircraft, and none more so than the heavy bomber.¹²

Four-engined bomber aircraft such as the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress and the Consolidated Vultee B-24 Liberator were largely experimental weapon systems prior to WWII. Technologies that allowed these (for the time) behemoths to fly thousands of miles and strike enemy targets with remarkable precision were cutting edge. Consider that in 1941 passenger airlines were in their infancy, and that heavier-than-air powered flight had been invented less than forty years before. Strategic bombing tactics (which included flying in large formations), navigation systems, targeting systems, high-altitude survival mechanisms, support systems and, of course, simply learning to fly the aircraft as part of a crew were all components of a vast, untested and unproven strategic combat system. Very young men often with no more than a high school education were trained in this system from 1941 to 1945 and were expected to master all the new technologies and tactics within a few weeks and perform in the most difficult, stressful and deadly conditions.

In 1942, Major General Robert Olds, commanding officer of the Second Air Force, laid out the precise purposes of the B-17 bomb squadron training fields:

1. Take men individually trained in the delicate art of bombing and weld them into a combat team that works as one man. Particular stress is laid on the ability of this united team to take a four-engine bomber to any target within maximum range, day or night, fair weather or foul, over land or sea, bomb the objective successfully and present the maximum defensive fire power necessary to ward off attacks by enemy pursuits enroute.
2. The organization and training of heavy bomber squadrons and groups is next in line and here special stress is laid on the close coordination of members of combat crew teams to produce essential mass tactics.
3. The trained and organized groups are given a finishing period of training from dispersed airdromes in close simulation of actual conditions encountered in each of the many combat theaters in which American air forces are operating in the second World war today.

The B-17 received the name "Flying Fortress" from a Seattle reporter who commented on its defensive firepower. The B-17 underwent a number of improvements over its 10-year production span. Throughout the War, the B-17 was refined and improved as battle experience showed the Boeing designers where improvements could be made. The final B-17 production model, the B-17G, was produced in larger quantities (8,680) than any previous model and is considered the definitive "Flying Fort." With its 13 .50-caliber

¹⁰ Ibid., (Callahan.)-

¹¹ Callahan, section 8, p.2; Scott Murdock, "The Use in 1995 of World War II Army Air Fields in the United States" (Master's Thesis, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Master of Aeronautical Science, Barksdale Air Force Base Resident Center) April, 1997. Ch. 2, P.1

¹² Callahan, section 8, p. 3.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 16

machine guns -- chin, top, ball and tail turrets; waist and cheek guns -- the B-17G was indeed an airplane that earned the respect of its combatants. In addition, air crews liked the B-17 for its ability to withstand heavy combat damage and still return its crew safely home. Between 1935 and May of 1945, 12,732 B-17s were produced. Of these aircraft, 4,735 were lost during combat missions.

Four 1,200 horsepower engines roar to life as the three-bladed propellers begin to turn. They spin faster, gaining speed with each revolution, yearning their pilot to ease the plane forward to takeoff into the expansive sky.¹³

Training at Cut Bank

The Cut Bank Army Air Force Base Airfield in coordination with the main Army Air Corps base at Great Falls and the other satellite airfields at Glasgow and Lewistown trained crews to operate the B-17 and the Norden Bombsight. A spokesman for the Army's Second Air Force command said that, "The crews at the four fields will be engaged in regular training flights to check on the accuracy of navigators and to promote teamwork among the crews. Much of their time will be devoted to practice bombing." The dispersed airfields permitted simulation of conditions in combat zones. One person compared flying over Central Montana with its lack of clearly identifiable landmarks to flying over blacked out England. Another Army spokesman explained that, "Many of the flights will be in precise formation, simulating battle conditions, when ships must be so spaced as to cover one another with guns." The skies over central Montana were filled with B-17s flying between the airfields, partaking in bombing practice, and testing long-range navigation skills.¹⁴

Aircraft from Lewistown, Great Falls, Glasgow and Cut Bank would take off at a predetermined time, form up in squadron formation over their respective locations, and later, over central Montana, join up in group formation. These bombardment groups, went on to participate in decisive raids over Germany opening the door for Allied daylight precision bombing. The Montana-trained squadrons flew at total of 1263 combat missions, dropped 71,128 tons of bombs, lost 548 aircraft and shot down 1018 enemy aircraft without ever turning away from a mission. They earned Presidential Unit Citations with valor and fortitude over Leipzig, Oscherslaben, Regensburg, Schweinfurt, Steyr and Zwickau. Assigned to the Mighty 8th and 15th Air Forces, the unwavering courage and unbowed bravery of airmen from this Montana airfield shines as this nation's bright pride.

Squadrons would fly into Cut Bank for one to three months of training in the open skies of Montana. The air crews would train day and night in all kinds of weather. Training combined navigation, bombing and gunnery practice, with familiarizing crews with all aspects of the B-17, each learning the jobs of other crew members of the plane. They would fly to "targets" in Montana, Washington, or Minnesota. 613th Squadron Veteran Elmer W. Ruschman remembered his time in Cut Bank:

...in early July [1943] we arrived by train at Great Falls, Montana. The 410st Bomb Group began to form at East Base and we were among the very first crews in the 613th Squadron. During the first weeks of training we were very short of airplanes but in time more arrived, enough for each crew. A decision was made for each of the four Squadrons to be based at nearby air bases in order to get to know each other on the ground. One Squadron stayed in Great Falls, one went to Lewistown, one to Glasgow, and ours was lucky enough to go to Cut Bank. Not all cities and towns treated the soldiers with respect, but the people in Montana were very good to us.

Our arrival in Cut Bank was on July 26th, 1943, and our barracks was next to the large water tower. Various phases of training took place here, flying formation, practice bombings at Big Sandy, gunnery practice and many other activities. By the middle of August most of us had returned from our furloughs to our homes, many of us would never see our homes again. Life at the base continued to improve as our skills at our job fell into a routine, and we readied ourselves for the day we would go into combat.¹⁵

The Army Air Corps in Cut Bank trained its pilots in the use of the Norden bombsight. Through the 1930s and into the first years of World War II, the War Department considered the Norden bombsight, a synchronous stabilized bomb-aiming device, "the foundation for American's precision bombing doctrine." At Cut Bank, the bombsight was kept in a small double-compartment concrete building

13 "B-17 Brings Back a Bit of Base History," Nucleus Journalist, November 17, 2006. available online at: http://www.kirtland.af.mil/organizations/377ABW/PublicAffairs/nucleus/2006/Nov_17/CMNU20061117Z012.pdf.

14 Lewistown *Democrat-News*, November 15, 1942.

15 Elmer W. Ruschman, "An Interesting Story," correspondence to Bob Jacoby, August 1995.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 17

accessed through bank vault doors. Barbed wire encircled the building and a sentry guarded the gate 24 hours a day.¹⁶

The Norden bombsight was a mechanical analog computer designed to determine the exact moment bombs needed to be released in order to hit their target. The 50-pound bombsight contained over 2,000 precision parts---a collection of gyros, motors, gears, mirrors, and levers---that reportedly could "put bombs in a pickle barrel."

Accuracy of the bombsight was solely dependent upon the bombardier's ability to set it properly. Some of the information, like speed, altitude, temperature, barometric pressure, and the bomb "curve" were calculated ahead of time using mathematical tables, and then again as the plane approached its target. In the final seconds before the bombs were dropped, the bombardier had to make sure the bombsight was level, that the plane was headed in the same direction as the sight, and make final adjustments to synchronize the sight with the speed of the plane. One author suggested that the bombardier "must use his fingers as skillfully as though he were playing a violin." The bombsight was connected with an automatic pilot that took control of the plane during the final seconds before the bomb was released.

Crouched in the plexiglass nose of the aircraft, bombardiers had the worst seat in the house. Breathing pure oxygen in temperatures of 40 below, their ears ringing with thousands of horsepower generated by hundreds of pistons, they had to adjust their bombsights--wearing silk gloves so their fingers wouldn't freeze onto the frigid metal--even as their airplanes flew through thick flak and withstood attack from enemy fighters. On their shoulders weighed the responsibility for the success of the entire mission.¹⁷

The crews that trained in Cut Bank would, when finished, fly directly to the air war in Europe. Many of these young men --- who worked at the airfield and danced with local girls on the weekends, who made friends around town, who married local girls --- never came home. Casualties among the bomber squadrons were terribly high, and the need for new crews unrelenting.

The buildings, structures and sites within the proposed historic district convey the significant story of the airfield. Here, the essential training runs of the crews began and ended. On the runways, taxiways, and hardstands themselves the crews learned the intricacies of the unwieldy B-17s. The size of these resources is indicative of the large scale of not only airplanes, but also the numerous, intense training sessions the crews underwent during their short time there. The runways and taxiways associated with the original AAF, including the associated aircraft hardstands, are vital to understanding the design and operating plan of these WWII era Army airbases. Because the original runway arrangement was much larger than was required for commercial small scale aircraft, much of the original runway complex (including use of most of the hardstands) was abandoned after 1943. Additionally, alterations in the form of resurfacing, lighting upgrades and additional taxiway construction have occurred to the original runway complex over time. However, the design, layout and engineering of the runway complex follows a standardized plan approved by the U.S. Army, and that general plan can still be seen today.

Of smaller stature than other buildings, but perhaps the most significant, was the school building. It offered classroom space, where the servicemen were taught a variety of subjects, including aircraft identification. Also housed in the training building were Link Simulators, fully equipped airplane cockpits used to replicate a variety of weather and terrain conditions. The recreation hall served a dual purpose, to provide a space for relaxation and entertainment, but also to build camaraderie between the troops, and help "weld them into a combat team that works as one man."

The hangar, armament building, vault, warehouses, wash stand and motor pool all served historically to store and maintain the valuable equipment and materials used on the base. The oil storage house was constructed of glazed brick to protect the base in case of an explosion. Though much of the base infrastructure has been lost to salvage or modification, the remaining resources accurately convey the multiple aspects -- training, maintenance, and morale -- of life at the base.

¹⁶ Though intact after the Army Air Force abandoned the airport in 1948, the Norden Bombsight Storage building was torn down in the 1990s as part of a airport maintenance project.

¹⁷ Most of the information on the Norden Bombsight, including the quotes, is from: Don Sherman, "The Secret Weapon," *Air & Space Magazine*, March 15, 1999.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 18

Life at the Base and in Cut Bank

As the construction of the Air Base progressed in the summer and fall of 1942, Cut Bank residents prepared to welcome the airmen into the community. Civic Clubs invited the officers to come speak with them and offer suggestions “as to the community’s participation in making life pleasant for the group stationed at the airport.”¹⁸ On October 30, Vivian Jeffrey of the *Cut Bank Pioneer Press* wrote “Soldier Boys, This is an Informal Introduction to Our City and an Invitation to ‘Make Y’rs’lf to Hum.” Jeffrey emphasized the generosity, patriotism, versatility and recreation facilities of Cut Bank, and offered a wish to make the airmen comfortable:

But there are many here who remember army life in the last war, and we believe we have a good idea of how you feel being away from home – especially if you’re a certain type of fellow. So our desire to be friendly and to make you welcome is not all wide-eyed naiveté and a small town frenzy for new excitement.

Nearly all of our young men are in the service, and many of these are probably lonesome and a little strange in someone else’s town. Thus, in a way, we are changing boys for a while. Lieut. Stanley who attended both meetings this week, told us something about the thing you enjoy doing, and you sound a lot like our boys.

If there is something we in Cut Bank can offer you which will remind you of home or will make your stay more pleasant, be assured that it will make us happy, too.¹⁹

By November, Cut Bank’s Armistice Day parade celebrated the base opening, and there were active plans to furnish the recreation facilities at the base. Money and items were donated, and the Masonic Hall offered its basement as a local USO center. The Blackfeet Tribe welcomed the airmen as well, and ushered in several officers as tribal members. The town hosted dances and dinners in town, and even began a circulating library at the base. The local high school basketball team began a friendly rivalry with the soldiers’ team at the base. For all the attention, the airmen were clearly very grateful, and several aligned themselves with the town permanently, by marrying local ladies.

The Hy Miller Hotel, Iverson’s Café, The Glacier Café, the Recreation Center, best known as the Bowling Alley, The Cut Bank Hotel were all frequent meeting places for the entire personnel, Santa Rita to the north and Shelby to the east had other places of interest. Christmas Day nearly every person in the Squadron was invited to dinner in the homes of Cut Bank and Shelby. To know how well the Squadron was received by the people of Cut Bank, one needs only to be reminded of one fact: Over 26 marriages between men of our Squadron and local girls took place.²⁰

At the airport, the trainees attended classes, maintained the equipment, and conducted drills and training missions. Though efforts were made to provide recreational relief, the airmen had a rigorous schedule and duties. Airport Reporter Pvt. Delbert Deem of the 352nd Airbase Squadron kept Cut Bank informed:

Friday night find a lot of activity here at the base. It all leads up to Saturday morning inspection of personnel and barracks. Each man is responsible for cleaning up around his cot. We all grab mops, brooms and brushes, and when the smoke clears away, the barracks are spotless. Pity the poor soldier who is caught without a clean shaven face. It’s all part of Army routine. We have had it drilled into us since the first day we entered the service, so it’s all part of our day’s work.

...Just a word now about the splendid way you, the people of Cut Bank, have received us. We appreciate it and we feel sure that you will be justified in “Keeping up the good work” as long as we come to town and conduct ourselves as Uncle Sam’s soldiers should.²¹

18 “Capitan Cooper is Guest of Lions Club,” *Cut Bank Pioneer Press*, October 23, 1942.

19 Vivian Jeffrey, “Soldier Boys, This Is an Informal Introduction to Our City and an Invitation to ‘Make Y’rs’lf to Hum,” *Cut Bank Pioneer Press*, October 30, 1943.

20 Author Unknown, AAFHRA, “Reminiscence,” on file with Bob Jacoby, Cut Bank Airport, Cut Bank, MT

21 Pvt. Delbert Deem, “They’re Drilling on the Hill – But Not for Crude Says Airport Reporter,” *Cut Bank Pioneer Press*, November 6, 1942.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 19

Private Deem and subsequent airbase reporters continued to provide updates and reports to the local newspaper, and published one of their own, dedicated to amusing stories and news at the airport. The extreme climate and enormity of their machines often made for interesting fare:

The extreme cold at Cut Bank can not be mentioned too much. An area around the water tower had to be roped off for protection against falling ice from the gigantic icicles which formed around the bottom of the tank. All the plumbing fixtures of the Post froze solid. Snow drifted at times four and five feet high blocking the roads and runways. One wheel of the aircraft in which Captain Neal was taking off ran into a drift. The plane was turned sideways off the runway forcing Captain Neal to take off cross-country through the deep snow. He had a difficult time but the plane finally rose safely from the ground.²²

Interaction between the citizens of Cut Bank and the airmen took place on base and off, as many local people worked at the airport for civilian and Army enterprises. Western Airlines continued its commercial flights, sharing the runways with the B-17s.²³

The Base Closes, but the Airport Continues

After 1943, the Army retained much of the military base at the Cut Bank Municipal Airport, but in 1948, conveyed its unsalvaged property – the leased land, buildings, and structures, to the City of Cut Bank and Glacier County. Western Airlines continued regular commercial service to the area through the post-war era. The ongoing commercial service is indicative of the relative prosperity enjoyed by region after 1945. While Cut Bank, due to its proximity to the Kevin-Sunburst oilfields, endured the Great Depression with more prosperity than other communities, it continued to thrive as a railroad, oil field support, agricultural, and commercial center in the late 1940s through the 1950s. Increased demand for petroleum products across the nation fueled the oil production economy in north-central Montana immediately after World War II. This, together with a general trend in greater agricultural production through the mid-1950s resulted in a post-war economic and population “boom.” This prosperity is reflected the infrastructure of the airport, where the Army Air Force Base buildings were stabilized with metal and asbestos siding, and a new modern terminal building was constructed in 1948.

However, after 1951, the state’s oil industry shifted from the north central fields to eastern Montana’s Williston Basin and Powder River area fields, and Billings’ refining center. Reflective of the general trend in the local economy, the airport provided regular commercial airline service until 1958, when Western Airlines eliminated its flights there. Over the subsequent decades, the airfield continued to serve as a port of entry, customs center, airfield to private aviators, and a locale for local business.

World War II “Temporary Structures”

Contrary to popular belief, the frame structures built at the time of WWII were not “temporary” in the sense of being shoddily built. As part of the mobilization effort, they were constructed to serve specific war time needs. The main reason that these structures were labeled “temporary” was due to the general opinion that wars end. Wars are temporary. One must keep in mind that the “temporary” structures were part of a large scale operation that affected the whole country.

It was a colossal undertaking to house an army of more than a million trainees in the space of just a few short months as was done at the beginning of World War II. The Army was able to provide adequate housing for over 6 million troops in the United States alone by November 1944. More than thirty thousand “temporary” wooden buildings housed approximately 95 percent of the troops.

These structures were built at a time when the building standards of military facilities were being raised to include indoor plumbing, electricity, and central forced-air heating, which had become the standard for most Americans. Consequently, these were among the first lot of buildings to possess such features. The U.S. economy was greatly impacted by the Mobilization construction, which contributed to the recovery of the building industry following the Great Depression.

The architecture of these buildings is straightforward. The design, greatly influenced by cost was intended to facilitate efficient and speedy construction. The designing of these buildings was safety. Apparently, this was the order of their priority as well. The construction of “temporary” structures during WWI was a cumbersome process. Shortly after WWI, the military began design on the

²² Author Unknown, AAFHRA, “Reminiscence,” on file with Bob Jacoby, Cut Bank Airport, Cut Bank, MT

²³ The Western Airlines terminal/Administration building was located at the north end of the building cluster, but was removed after 1958.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 20

700 Series that was used at the onset of WWII. These plans were often revised so it was decided that a “leaner and meaner” building was needed; therefore, the 800 Series was created. Both the 700 Series and the 800 Series were employed. The most quickly constructed building during WWI was completed in three hours. The average during WWII was one per hour with the record being fifty-four minutes. To accomplish this speed, the Army used techniques such as using a few standardized plans, prefabricated components, and the assembly-line approach to construction..

The structures were built with the expectation that they would last only 5 to 20 years. However, they have been somewhat over-designed if the objective was to erect temporary structures. President Roosevelt promised the mothers of servicemen that modern facilities and adequate shelter would be provided. It was determined that the troops would get the basic comforts that were considered to be standard among average American citizens by 1940 – no less and no more. This required substantial improvements in the way facilities were built. This is also why the buildings were painted at the cost of millions of dollars in spite of the concept that they were only meant to last a few years. The painting and other improvements were done on the urging of Eleanor Roosevelt, who argued that it made a big difference to the morale of the soldiers.

These “temporary” buildings are just as important as the other historic buildings. They are also significant for the way they influenced the building industry. These “temporary” buildings represent a construction methodology that swept the country after the war; that is, standardized plans, prefabrication of components and construction crews that specialized in only one aspect of the construction process. Developers were faced with the same pressure for expedience after the war as millions of veterans returned home with the dream of owning a home for the first time. The many suburban developments that sprung up all over the country – where entire tracts were laid out, constructed, and marketed by a single developer – were largely made possible by the experience that both developers and laborers gained while constructing the “temporary” military structures.

Another way in which these buildings are significant is through the part they played in furthering various building technologies. For example, many early twentieth-century products such as plywood, hardboard, gypsum board, (sheet rock,) and asbestos cement gained acceptance as standard products due to their extensive use by the military during WWII. Some of these were still considered by many as being in their experimental stage prior to the war. For example, the glues used for plywood was too weak prior to the 1940s. Others met opposition among tradesmen, as was the case with gypsum board with many plasterers.

This methodology and these “technological innovations” were neither invented by the military nor new. However, such practices and materials were neither considered to be nor proven to be effective prior to their large scale use by the military for these “temporary” buildings.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 21

Sources for Cut Bank Airport/Air Base History

Cut Bank Pioneer Press –(CBPP) local newspaper, Publication dates: 8/07/42, 8/14/42, 8/21/42, 9/11/42, 9/18/42, 9/25/42, 10/02/42, 10/09/42, 10/23/42, 10/30/42, 11/06/42, 11/13/42, 11/20/42, 11/27/42, 12/04/42, 12/11/42, 12/18/42, 12/25/42, 01/01/43, 01/08/43, 01/15/43, 01/22/43, 01/29/43, 02/05/43, 02/12/43.

“Air Base Weekly Chat”–weekly article by Cpl. Delbert Deems, 352 Airbase Squadron, published in *Cut Bank Pioneer Press*, Publication dates: 11/23/42, 11/20/42, 11/27/42, 12/11/42, 12/18/42, 12/25/42, 01/01/43, 01/08/43, 01/15/43, 01/22/43, 01/29/43, 02/05/43, 02/12/43, 02/19/43.

“GI Genius” –base newspaper, Publication dates: first edition, no masthead and undated; Vol.1, No. 09/11/43; Vol. 1, No. 9, 09/18/43; Vol. 1, No. 6, 08/25/43.

Glacier County Historical Society – (GCHS) local museum archives,

Malmstrom AFB Museum, Great Falls, Montana

AAIR- Aviation Archaeological Investigation & Research, Mesa. AZ

AFHSO – Air Force Historical Studies Office

AFHRA – Air Force Historical Research Agency

NARA- National Archives and Research Administration

Books

History of Glacier County Montana, GCHS

The 385th Bomb Group, A New History – Bill Varnedoe, Jr.

The 390th Bomb Group Anthology – Vol II- The Sq. J. Group

Pictorial Record of the 401st Bomb Group

History of Cut Bank Lodge #82 A. F. & G. M-Masonic Lodge

City of Cut Bank/Glacier County Airport Commission- records

Glacier County Court house – records

Original Air Base construction blueprints housed at GCHS

Cut Bank Lion’s Club – historical records

Individual Contributions

Elmer Ruschman-photos & stories – trained here with the 401st Bomb Group

Edwin Davis-photos & stories – trained here with the 401st Bomb Group

William Cozart – photo & stories, trained here with the 2nd Bomb Group

Betty (ValAlstine) Dean – civilian base employee

Wanda Grosser-relative of base fireman

William Furois-relative of base fireman

Diane(Slotsve) Nelson-relative of base fireman

Website information & databases provided for the following Bomb Groups:

2nd Bomb Group

351st Bomb Group

385th Bomb Group

390th Bomb Group

401st Bomb Group

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

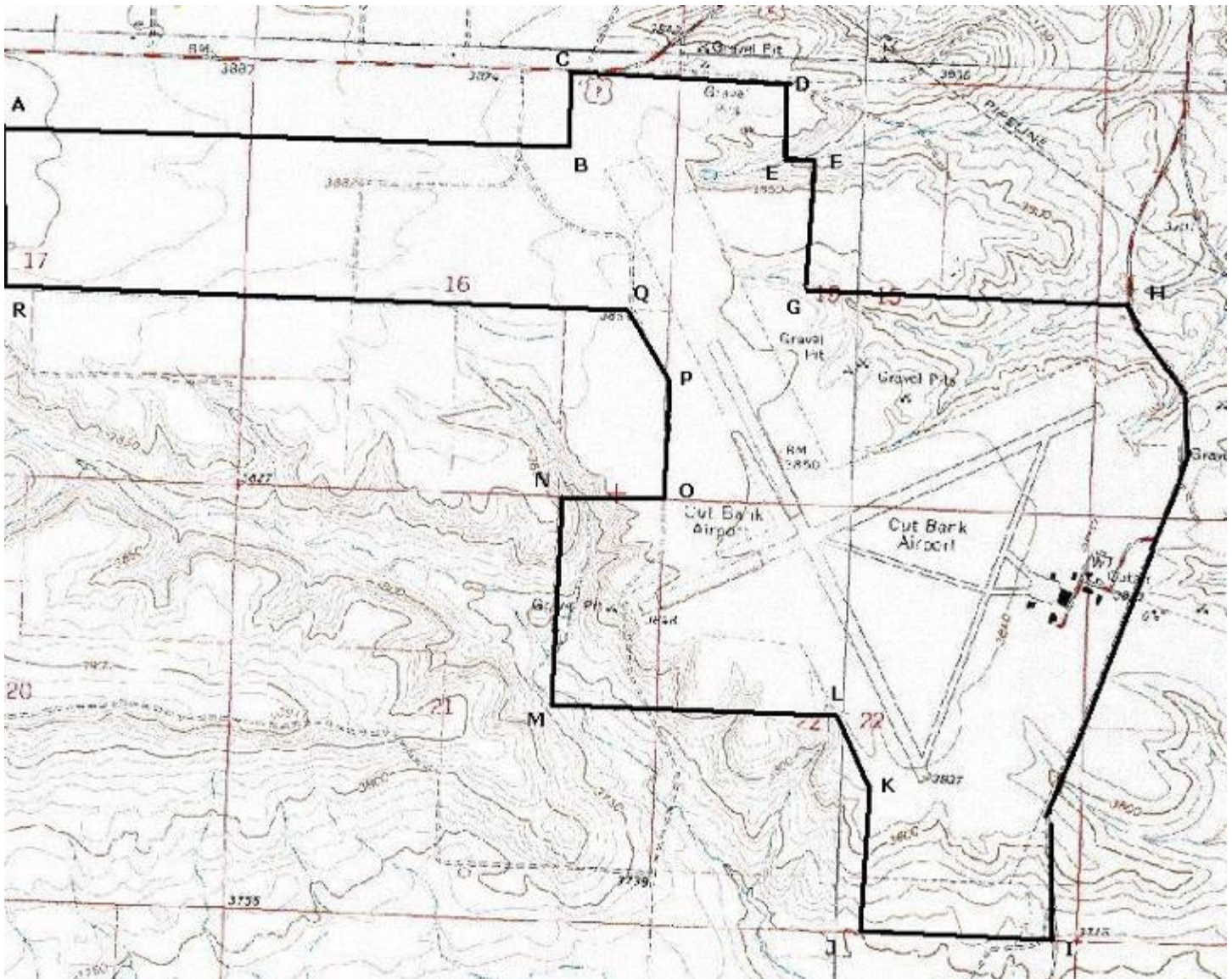
DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 22



District Boundary, details from Cut Bank SE and Squaw Buttes 7.5 Minute Quadrangles. Points A and R are actually located just off the map to the left (west) to encompass the S $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, and the N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 17.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

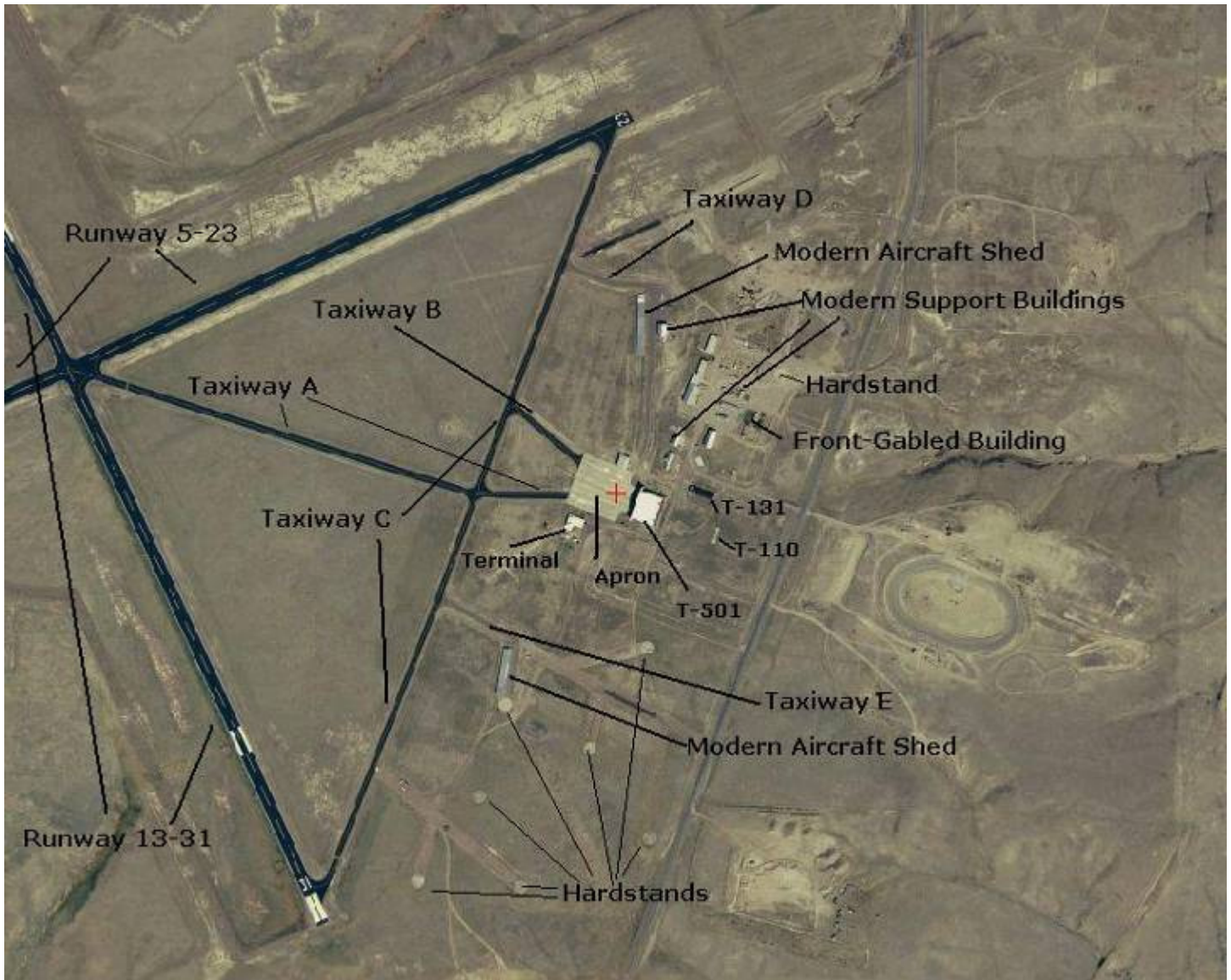
DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 23



Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base, building clusters and hardstands detail, 2004.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 24

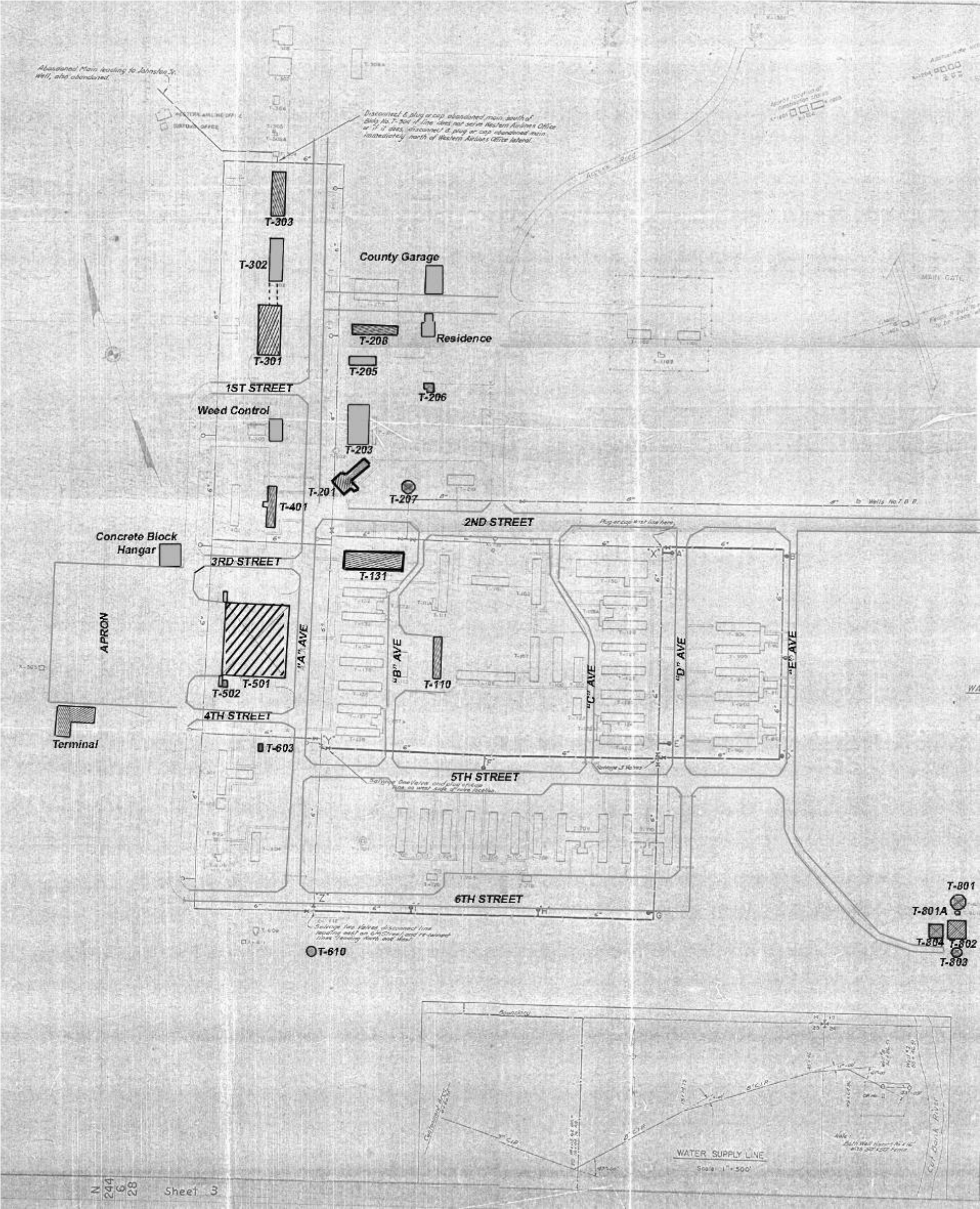


Overview of airfield, 2004

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

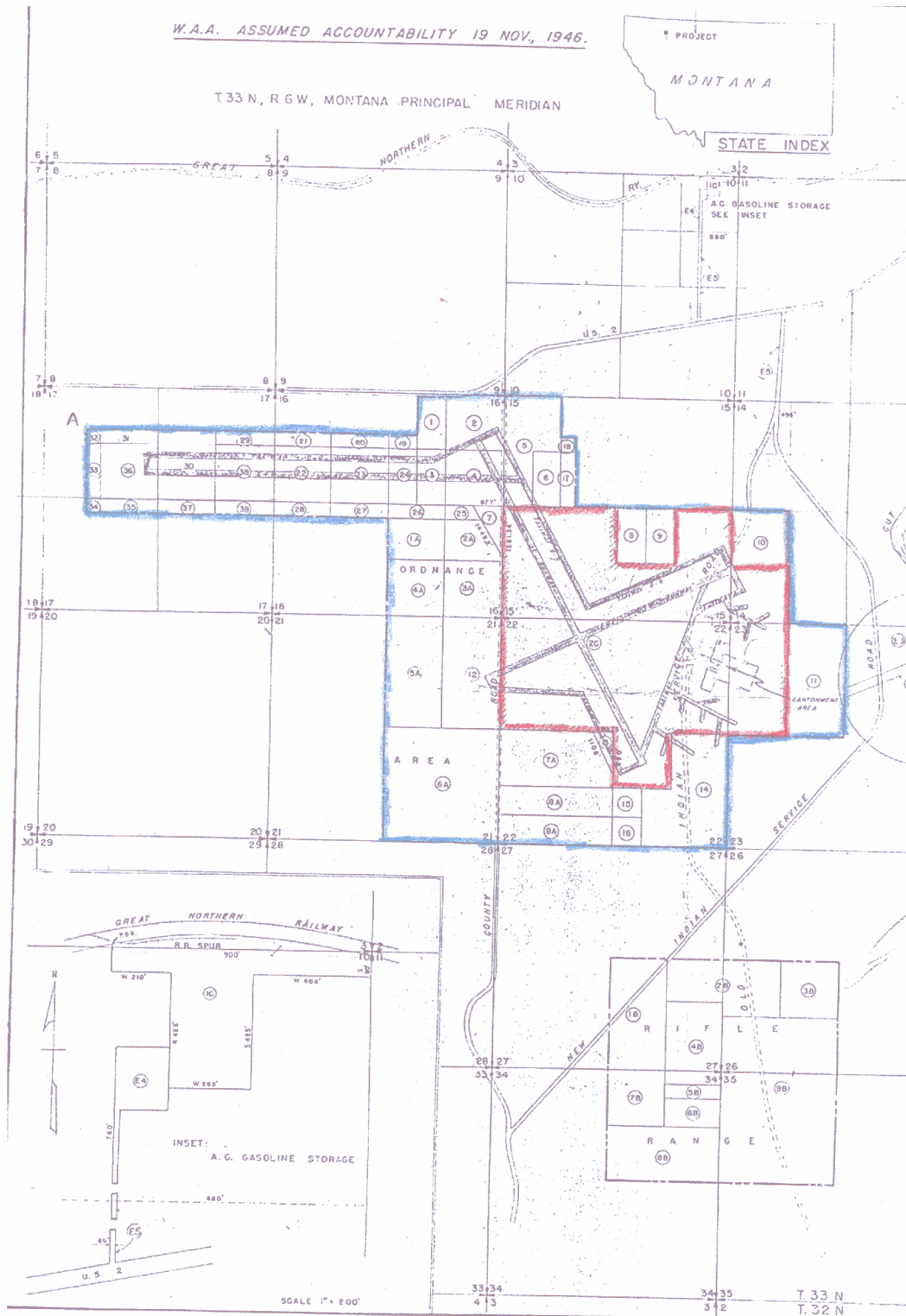


Detail of Building Cluster, showing some contributing and non-contributing resources, from c. 1948 as built blueprints. Contributing resources are hatched, non-contributing filled with grey.

DRAFT

Section number 10

Page 26



1946 US Army Air Force Map showing original 760 acres of the municipal airport, and the base in 1946, including 1780 acres.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 27



Western Airlines inaugural flight, 1941.



Western Airlines Inaugural Flight, 1941.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 28



**Secretary of War Visits Cut Bank
August 22nd, 1941**

(left to right) J. Hugo Aronson, George Chasse, F.R. LaFontise, Dr. C.H. Minette,
Mr. Henry L. Stinson, Donald S. Libby, E.C. Clapper

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 29

Cut Bank, Montana
November 11, 1942



Parade part of the celebration of activating the
Cut Bank Army Air Force Base.
(photo courtesy of the James Crouch family)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 30



Cut Bank Army Air Force Base, 1942.



Airman Glenn Campbell CBAAF B c.1943.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 31



**Prude Furois
& son Bill**



James S. Crouch



**Oscar Slotsve
& daughter Diane**



Five civilian firemen transferred from the Rapid City Airfield in South Dakota and came to work at the Cut Bank AAFB in June of 1942.

James Wilson was the original Fire Chief but soon transferred to the East Base at Great Falls. Prude Furois then became the new Fire Chief and remained so until the base closed.

Prude, James, Oscar and Clark all remained in Cut Bank and have since passed on.

Not Pictured:
James Wilson



Clark Potter



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 32



Recreation Hall T-131, c. 1950.



Hangar T-501, c. 1950.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 33



Recreation Hall, T-131, contributing, west and south elevations.



Recreation Hall T-131, contributing, north and west elevations.



Motor Pool, T- 203, non-contributing, north and west elevations. T-131, the Recreation Hall, is in the background.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 34



Motor Pool, T-203, non-contributing, west and south elevations. County Road Superintendent's Residence and T-206 Dope House are in the background to the right (northeast). The Wash Stand, T-205, and School Building, T-208 are behind (north of) the Motor Pool. The Fire Station/Crash Shed T-201 foundation is in the foreground to the right (south).



Wash Stand, T-205, non-contributing, west and south elevations. T-208, the School building is to the left (north) and the front-gabled building is in the background.



Dope House T-206, contributing, south and east elevations. Wash Stand T-205 is left (west) and County Road Superintendent's Residence is right (north).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 35



Dope House T-206, contributing, west and south elevations.



Dope House T-206, contributing, north and west elevations.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 36



Water Tower Footings T-207, contributing, view to southwest. Recreation Hall T-131 and Hangar T-501 in background.



Air Corps Warehouse, T-301, contributing, east elevation.



Quarter Master Warehouse, T-302, non-contributing, east elevation. T-303 is to the right (north).

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 37



Quarter Master Warehouse, T-302, non-contributing, west elevation.



Quarter Master Warehouse and Post Engineer's Office, T-303, contributing building, south and east elevations.



Quarter Master Warehouse and Post Engineer's Office, T-303, contributing building, west and south elevations.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 38



Armament Building T-401, contributing, east elevation.



Armament Building, T-401, contributing, west and south elevations. County Weed Control Building to the left (north), and Fire Station/Crash Shed T-201 foundation is beyond the front of the building to the right (east).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 39



Hangar T-501, contributing, west elevation. Apron in foreground.



Hangar T-501, contributing, west and south elevations.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 40



Hangar, T-501, contributing, south and east elevations. T-401 Armament Building to right (north).



Hangar T-501, east elevation. Concrete Block Hangar to right (northwest).



Hangar T-501, contributing, north elevation.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

DRAFT

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 41



Hangar T-501, contributing, rafters.



Control Tower Footings T-502, contributing, view to north.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 42



Equipment Vault T-603, contributing, view to north, towards Hangar T-501, of hatch and vent.



Equipment Vault T-603, contributing, interior view from top of hatch, looking down.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 43



Wind Cone T-610, contributing, view to north.



Imhoff Cone, T-801, contributing, view to southeast.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 44



T-802 Sprinkling Filter, Contributing, view to southeast.



Secondary Clarifier, T-803, contributing, view to southeast.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 45



Sludge Drying Bed, T-804, contributing, view to south.



Terminal, contributing, east elevation.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 46



Terminal, contributing, north elevation



Cut Bank Municipal Airport 1948 Terminal Building, view to the northwest.



Concrete Block Hangar, non-contributing, south and east elevations.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 47



Modern Shed and Gabled Support Building, non-contributing, north end of building cluster. View to North.



County Weed Control, non-contributing, south and east elevations.



County Garage, non-contributing, west and south elevations.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

DRAFT

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Cut Bank Municipal Airport and Army Air Force Base
Glacier County, MT

Page 48



County Road Superintendent's Residence, north and west elevations.



North and east elevations of, from left (south) to right (north), T-501 Hangar, contributing, T-401 Armament Building, contributing, and County Weed Control, non-contributing. To the extreme right is a small scale shed, which is not counted.